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Salisbury Transit System Offering Free Bus Rides on Orange and Red Ozone Action Days for Third Consecutive Year

Municipal Agreement with NCDOT to Provide Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Funding in Support of Complimentary Fares

Salisbury, NC _June 3, 2009 – The City of Salisbury’s Transit Division announces that it will offer free city bus rides on Orange and Red Ozone Action Days, for the third consecutive summer. The program is currently underway and will run during through September 30, 2009. The program timeline spans the NC Division of Air Quality’s specified ozone “season”. A municipal agreement between the City and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) provides funding via the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) Project. The grant strives to improve consumer relations, promote customer service, and market local transit systems. In addition, the program creates health consciousness and improves air quality by encouraging drivers to make use of the public transit system.

Mayor Susan Kluttz, speaking on behalf of the Salisbury City Council shares, “Accessible transit services are crucial in allowing our citizens to fully participate in all elements of community environment. Public transportation enables our residents to travel to work, conduct business, reach health-care facilities, and participate in local events with family and friends.” Offering that ground-level ozone and smog can form when cars and household products create harmful emissions, Kluttz adds, “The ‘FREE Bus Fare’ program is a wonderful way to reduce air pollution by making a simple change in our daily lives. Our city strives to be a good steward of the environment and the use of our public transit system to reduce emissions is a vital means to improving air quality in Salisbury.”

A May 2009 report issued by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) in Washington, DC, shares that Americans took close to 10.7 billion rides on public transportation during 2008. The total represents a peak in ridership over the last fifty years. In addition, the APTA reports ridership has increased 38% since 1995. Kluttz adds, “Today, more than ever, our citizens are looking for ways to save money; public transportation provides an opportunity to conserve significantly. Citizens can preserve their finances and help save our environment by riding the bus. It’s a win-win situation for us all.” According to the APTA, the average person can save over \$8,600 annually, (based upon May 2009 gas prices and parking fees) by simply switching to public transportation. For more information visit the APTA website at www.publictransportation.org.

City of Salisbury Transit Division Manager Rodney Harrison shares, "We are truly grateful to receive CMAQ funding support again this year. The City of Salisbury is proud to do our part locally to improve air quality. The free ride program offers an opportunity to highlight the value of our bus service to the community. This program also allows first-time riders to experience our transit system for absolutely no charge." The Salisbury Transit system prides itself on customer service and travels to numerous major shopping destinations throughout the city including the Salisbury Mall, Wal-Mart, Innes Street Market, Magic Mart, K-Mart, and the Ketner Center. In addition, the bus system travels to Rowan Cabarrus Community College, Livingstone College and within blocks of Catawba College. The Employment Security Commission, Post Office, Health Department, Rowan Regional Medical Center, V.A. Hospital and the Department of Social Services, are included within the Transit system's normal daily route. Frequent bus stops throughout Downtown Salisbury offer a one-block walking distance from the City Square. In addition, City bus routes include destinations in Spencer and East Spencer.

The current rate for bus riders is 1.00 for regular fares with senior citizens and handicapped riders at 50 cents per person. Transfers and children under the age of five are free. Riders may board and disembark from any designated bus stop throughout the City or at the Salisbury Transfer site on Depot Street, located adjacent to the Amtrak Train Station. City buses arrive and depart daily from the transfer site at 15 minutes before and 15 minutes after the hour. Bus service is available Monday through Friday from 6:15 am to 6:45 pm and on Saturday from 8:45 am to 4:15 pm. City buses are non-operational on Sunday.

By 5 pm each day, the Salisbury Transit Division receives the local air quality and ozone level report forecast for the following day. If the local forecast predicts an orange or red ozone action day, the free ride program will be initiated. Probable riders may contact the Transit Hotline at 704-216-7537 after 7 pm to receive an updated ozone status report for the next day. In addition, citizens may visit the City of Salisbury's Transit Division webpage at www.salisburync.gov/transit for an ozone update.

Salisbury will continue to promote the "free ride" program with its recognized marketing campaign from 2007 and 2008. The slogan designed to assist in creating awareness for air quality and the City's complimentary bus fare promotion, encourages citizens to "Help Clear the Air...with FREE Bus Fare!" The catch-phrase alludes to precautions issued with respect to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Air Quality Index. Ozone is the main component of urban smog and can be harmful to one's health. Even at low levels, ozone can cause a number of respiratory effects, particularly in susceptible individuals such as young children, the elderly, or those with asthma and breathing difficulties. Ground level ozone concentrations are more likely to surpass safe health levels on very hot days with slight or no wind and temperatures in the 90 degrees and above range. Transit Manager Harrison explains that the majority of high ozone concentrations usually occur between 10 am and 8 pm and that stagnant air masses, occurring in late summer, can trap and hold ozone near the surface. Harrison notes, "Posters, flyers, maps, and banners are currently being distributed throughout our city. Citizens may stop by the City Office Building, 132 N. Main Street, or visit any of our Salisbury Parks & Recreation Centers for detailed maps outlining transit destinations and arrival and departure times. We encourage our citizens to benefit from the free bus ride initiative and leave the driving to us."

For more information regarding the City of Salisbury's "Help Clear the Air...with FREE Bus Fare" initiative, please contact Harrison via the Transit Office at 704-638-5253. The City of Salisbury is an equal opportunity employer with over 180 different job classifications and 400 full time positions. For more information regarding the City of Salisbury and its services and departments, please visit us on the web at www.salisburync.gov.

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